

Foreword

The present book is the outcome of a project initiated by the Jagiellonian University Institute of Middle and Far Eastern Studies, and the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture “Confucius Institute in Krakow”. Both the curriculum and the research interests of the academic staff at the Institute of Middle and Far Eastern Studies focus on modern and contemporary Asia in its cultural, economic, political and social aspects. Several scholars from its Chinese section, whose research and publication topics concern or are related to mass media in China, joined forces with the Confucius Institute, whose mission is promoting Chinese language and culture, and embarked on the realization of the above-mentioned project. The project arose from a desire to supplement the research into contemporary China already conducted in Poland with a perspective that is very significant, but has hitherto been insufficiently represented – that of the media. Its aim was to take the first steps towards the creation in Poland of an academic environment for discussions concerning issues related to mass media in China and the various images of China depicted in the media of other countries.

In his book that sums up the most recent achievements of anthropology (2004, pp. 404-405), M. Herzfeld argues that mass media occupy an important place in the contemporary world. As they are reproduced on a very large scale and thus easily accessible, they have become a constitutive part of their audience’s everyday lives, whose presence is so common as to be taken for an obvious, unquestioned fact. They act as sources of inspiration, offering models of alternative lives, individual and collective identities, and promoting certain values and world-views. On the other hand, new interactive and participatory media such as the internet can offer their users the means for contesting established truths or mainstream cultural assumptions. As products of the broader historical, social, economic, political and cultural context in which they come into being, the media also reflect major transformations in the above-mentioned fields,

as well as the public feeling and official or dominant stances on certain issues that are significant at a certain moment.

As organizers of the above-mentioned project, we wished to create a forum for the discussion of topics such as: the way in which various images of the world, as well as major social, economic and political processes and transformations of the last decades, are articulated in Chinese media; the various models of identity or lifestyle that Chinese media offer their audience; persuasive strategies employed by authors of media content; the ways in which the media are used in order to challenge the established order and voice alternative views. At the same time, given the fact that China is aspiring to a world-power status, we also thought it interesting to consider the way China-related issues are represented in the media of other countries, in order to find out how China is actually perceived and how well it is known.

The first stage of the project was an intellectually stimulating international symposium convened at the Jagiellonian University by the Institute of Middle and Far Eastern Studies and the Confucius Institute in Krakow on the 7th and 8th of November 2011. It was the first academic conference organized in Poland that brought to the forefront issues related to Chinese media. It proved to be a success, with over twenty participants who presented papers covering a wide range of topics: cross-cultural communication and identity, intercultural space and the role of media in its creation, the printed press in China during the first decades of the 20th century, transformations in the media systems of Central European countries and China, media-related legal issues, alternative media and citizen journalism in China, persuasive strategies employed in the Chinese media discourse, as well as content analyses of Chinese and foreign media. Most participants came from Polish universities. Among them were representatives of the two sinology departments in Warsaw and Poznań, and of other leading Polish academic centres for Chinese studies. To our great satisfaction, the conference also aroused the interest of non-sinologists who, alongside their main academic concerns, conduct comparative research into media in Poland and China, and survey the media discourse in Poland and other European countries, searching for images of China and the Chinese. Thus, we attained our goal of bringing together Polish scholars whose work illustrates the current state of research into Chinese media in our country. We were also happy to host scholars from China, Denmark, Romania and Ukraine, who through their valuable presentations and the ideas put forward during discussions, placed our central conference topic within a broader context.

Most of the essays collected in the present book elaborate on the research findings already discussed during the conference; to these were

added two other papers, not presented during the conference, but whose subjects are closely connected with the symposium's main concerns. The book does not reflect the whole array of topics presented at the conference, but focuses on various images constructed in the media. Apart from readers interested in media contents as such, we hope that readers interested in Chinese nationalism, the growth of China's global economic influence, globalization and localization of Chinese media contents, Sino-African relations, or ethnic Chinese communities in other countries, will also find it useful.

The first section of the book contains only one essay, whose subject matter and the period it concerns make it stand out from the remaining papers. Luminița Bălan discusses the way in which the process of defining China's national language was reflected in the printed press of the early 20th century. The first decades of the previous century were a period of turmoil, which caused China's political and intellectual elite to search for adequate patterns of reform, modernization and national revitalization in order to strengthen the country in the face of threat from foreign powers. Language was perceived as a key factor for building the nation and enlightening the masses. The press provided a forum for heated debates over the choice of a linguistic variety which was most suited to play this role, and it was also the press that served as the most important instrument for promoting the variety which was ultimately chosen – the vernacular (白话 *baihua*). This essay can be read as study case that proves Leo Ou-fan Lee's point: in China at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the print culture played a fundamental role in the creation of modernity and of the nation as imagined community (2000, 2001).

Two of the essays in the second section of the book show the extent to which media in the PRC present official, unquestionable versions of important events on the one hand, and openly discuss matters of public interest on the other. This section, which contains analyses of Chinese media, opens with an essay by Marcin Jacoby, who reveals the rhetorical strategies employed by official Chinese-language PRC media in order to portray Liu Xiaobo soon after he obtained the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. Unlike Western media, which depicted Liu in a positive light as a fighter for democracy, media in the PRC opposed the Nobel Committee's decision and put forward unambiguously negative assessments of Liu as an enemy of the whole Chinese nation. It is not Liu's beliefs, statements and writings which became the target of criticism, but Liu as a person and his alleged servility towards the West. Article authors appealed to the readers' emotions by emphasizing the threat posed by Liu to national security. Dominik Mierzejewski's paper, on the other hand, shows that PRC media are not only keen on presenting a single, official version of

certain important issues, but are also beginning to publish debates on matters of great interest for the Chinese public opinion, which illustrates a growing degree of openness as to government activities. The author analyzes several articles from *Nanfang chuang* magazine, which comment upon legal and administrative problems related to the budget and public spending. However, he concludes by remarking that the growing transparency related to issues which arouse public discontent, but which had previously not been publicly discussed, such as corruption, or the central government's lack of control over local cadres, is not necessarily a sign of the fact that media have actually acquired the freedom to oversee or control the authorities. Such media debates are rather the result of the party-state's policy of stimulating public discussions in order to appease public anger or anxiety, and to create an image of its own utilitarian role.

The second section also contains two papers dealing with the issue of nationalism in Chinese media. Joanna Wardega depicts the image of China as it has become after thirty years of reform, constructed and presented to the world by means of a large-scale national undertaking: the Olympic Games held in Beijing in 2008, and the way in which this image was promoted in the PRC media. The media discourse emphasized the motives of state power and China's firm position in the global world, which can finally make up for the so-called "century of humiliation", and have the effect of strengthening the Communist Party's legitimacy within China. By means of various national symbols, the media also appealed to the patriotic sentiments of the audience and interpellated them (in Althusser's terms, 2006) as members of the national community. Dr. Zhai Zheng's essay is a very interesting response to the works of scholars who draw attention to the growing nationalist feelings expressed in Chinese media, especially the internet (see Yang, 2009; Hughes, 2006; Wang, 2006; Zhang, 1998, among others). The author performs a comparative analysis of blog entries, blog comments and newspaper articles that contributed to the heated controversy caused by the presence of a Starbucks venue inside the Forbidden City in Peking in 2007 on the one hand, and of Western (UK and US) press articles which covered this controversy, on the other. Although the Western press emphasized Chinese protests against Starbucks as illustrations of growing nationalist sentiments, Zhai's study of actual comments by Chinese netizens and opinions expressed in PRC print media shows that the Chinese are not so ethnocentric as Western journalists portray them to be, and puts forward the hypothesis that it is the latter who may actually display a higher degree of ethnocentrism.

Finally, my own article contained in the second section is a response to accusations of indiscriminate promoting of consumerism and copying of Western models, directed against Chinese editions of international fash-

ion magazines by PRC scholars. I argue that, on the contrary, the authors of articles published by these magazines are very much aware of their own and their readers' position, both within a local and a global context, and draw upon this awareness in order to achieve specific persuasive goals. More specifically, the authors of the several articles from the PRC edition of *Cosmopolitan* analyzed in this paper reduce or increase cultural distance by placing certain issues, which are significant for contemporary Chinese women, such as feminism and women's rights, marriage, motherhood, individual choice, or the cult of youth, against a local or a foreign background. They do so in order to increase the persuasive potential of their arguments, to avoid conflicts with the values upheld by more traditionally-minded readers, or to dismiss potential suspicions of promoting views that go against moral or political correctness.

The third and final section of the book contains articles that discuss the way in which China, Chinese people or Chinese ethnic identity are reflected in the media in countries other than China itself. One of these articles, co-authored by Jarosław Jura and Kaja Kałużyńska, approaches a very up-to-date topic: China's economic relations with Africa and the Chinese presence in African countries, which have intensified for the last decade or so, with support from the Chinese government. They approach this topic from a perspective that should be of great interest to the Chinese authorities: the way the Chinese presence in Africa is perceived by citizens of the countries concerned, by bringing into close scrutiny the opinions of Zambian netizens. Generally speaking, the Chinese are seen in a better light than the West, as China and Africa share (at least to a certain extent) a common past as victims of Western domination. Nevertheless, due to various factors, in recent years this perception has begun to change, and this tendency is reflected in Jura and Kałużyńska's findings: although for the most part Zambian netizens' assessment of China can be termed as neutral, incidents arising from intercultural differences are likely to cause hostility in the local population. Therefore, both Chinese authorities and company managers and employees should become thoroughly acquainted with the local cultural context and pay closer attention to intercultural communication.

Two of the essays included in this section analyse China's growing role as global economic power, as reflected in Western media. Michał M. Bukowski performed content analysis on a sample of over six hundred Polish media texts from 2009 and 2010, in order to find out whether China was depicted as semi-periphery of the world-economy, and whether the media contained any predictions as to its cooperation or conflicts with other similar countries in its aspiration to core state status. He concludes that Polish authors actually do not depict China as semi-periphery and

do not comment on the possible changes it may cause in the world-economy, but rather (quite stereotypically) only on its rise as world economic power compared to the US, without elaborating on its aftermath within the world-system. Zhang Xiaoying's article is valuable for its subversive point of view, which goes against the grain of a tendency to view China critically, whether in Western media or academic writings. She analyses *The Economist*, which she considers to be illustrative of Western liberal thought, searching for the way this magazine has been constructing the image of China against a global background since the 1980s. She finds out that *The Economist* perceives China's role on the stage of global economy in ways that are most likely to benefit the West. Whether as follower of the Western model of capitalism, as threat to global economic stability or, on the contrary, as partner contributing to its maintenance, or finally as saviour of the world market after the financial crisis of 2008, China is always depicted as subordinated to the West, in that it should uphold the Western model. When it comes to the issue of global warming, on the other hand, *The Economist* mostly portrays China in negative terms as one of the world's greatest polluters; it expects China to take responsibility for the damages its policy has caused, as well as decisive action in order to reduce the scale of the problem. However, the magazine only imposes its expectations upon China, not allowing for the expression of the latter's own perspective.

The two papers that conclude the book offer critical approaches to the way the Chinese are perceived in countries in which they constitute ethnic minorities – Italy and Indonesia. Karolina Golemo shows how Italian media rely on discriminating stereotypes; the image of the Chinese thus created does not change over time and is in tune with the way in which immigrants in general are depicted by Italian journalists. The Chinese are presented as a community shrouded in mystery, which arouses suspicions of involvement in criminal acts by its traditions of in-group mutual support and resource sharing, as well as by its tendency to isolate itself from Italian society. When discussing this community, Italian journalists employ formulaic expressions referring to organized crime, or neutral terms placed into contexts of occurrence with negative connotations. Images of exploitation and inhuman working conditions are used to explain the economic success of the Chinese in Italy and to present them as a threat to local enterprise. Dobrochna Olszewska discusses the cinematic portrayal of the Chinese ethnic group in Indonesia, against the background of inter-ethnic relations. She shows the changes that have occurred in this portrayal over time, as well as the constant influence over it of official policies towards the Chinese minority, starting with Dutch colonial times through the Suharto and Sukarno presiden-

cies which opened the era of independent statehood in Indonesia, and ending with the period from 1998 to our times. Although they may oppose common negative stereotypes, thus rehabilitating the Chinese community, and showing it as deeply anchored in Indonesian society, as well as contributing to the building of national history, recent popular films propose a simplified, superficial image of Chineseness and ignore many aspects of inter-ethnic relations.

We hope that the English edition of this book will both inspire further Polish research into Chinese media and media images of China, and present to the international academic community a glimpse into the most recent research findings by Polish scholars and into their cooperation with representatives of academic centres in China and Europe.

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